

“On the Road Again—But Which Road?”
Genesis 2:15-17; Acts 2:37-47;
John 14:1-7

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It's good to be back. I was off to the UK for a few weeks. Last week, I was back mid-week but went up to Spalding with our mission team and had a wonderful weekend up there. As I traveled in the UK, I spent some time in London,—you know, London has this incredible underground system, they call it the Tube. It's a subway train system and sometimes when you come up out of this system, you see a sign that says you go this way or that way. I could go one of those two ways when I came up from underground and I still didn't know where I was. Complete disorientation after having gone hither, thither and yon underground. I came up and my sense of direction was just gone. And, being in a new place or a different place, nothing looked familiar. It made me think of those times in our lives, those moments where we experience complete disorientation. We have to take a minute and find a way to get through that disorientation.

The other thing you might notice about this photograph is where this particular tube station is: Tower Bridge. Which also makes me think about the tumult in our world today and how there is a way in which that itself is disorienting, how moments of violence and struggle cause a disorientation. Terrorism itself, what is it and how do we deal with it—all of that. It feels like there is a tumult in the world that causes me a lot of disorientation.

And yet, as I was listening to the radio this week, there is another way in which I felt like it's not only disorientation; perhaps maybe it's that I have too much orientation. There's a sense that my life just begins to become kind of rote. I heard this radio essay on this guy who decided that his life was pretty nice. He went to work each day, he had all the stuff he needed, he got together with this one little set of friends and what he began to realize is that he was living life in a bubble, always the same. His preferences defined everything he did. He recognized that there was a certain way in which this was stultifying, that it didn't really bring the fullness of life. Now, he was a computer engineer and so he created an app so he could find random Facebook public events to just go and see.

I'm not sure that I want to get out of my bubble by just doing things randomly. It is perhaps what Jesus is beginning to talk about when he says “I am the way.” Sometimes it feels like I can live in a bubble and everything else feels disorienting. I feel the need to get out of that bubble without becoming completely disoriented. How do I do that? There are always a couple of choices, at least a few crossroads, and a number of ways to change. Which way do I go? You think about the next direction. How do you make that decision?

I tend to think it would be nice if I always knew what the best practices were, things that were experimentally verified so I could know that it worked. But in the midst of every social situation, that's impossible. Societies themselves are so complex that it's

hard to find those direct, verifiable ways forward sometimes. Then you go to different cultures and it's just throws everything.

Or we could use some of the directions that society suggests for us. There are four things that come to mind. One is profit—I could just try and profit from everything I do. Or, find pleasure in everything I do. Or, find personal growth in everything I do. And if that doesn't work, I can try to force it through aggression and maybe even violence. I was thinking about those first three; if I worked on a profit, pleasure and personal growth way forward and I decided to get married and those were the three things I decided to base my marriage on, how well do you think that would go? We need something different, don't we? It's not a complete way. We need a way.

And when Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," he is giving us, I think, a pretty clear message. He is the way. If I were to do a Trinity Sunday message, and today is Trinity Sunday, I would talk about Jesus as the way, God as reality or truth, and the Spirit as life, although you have to be careful about modalism. I would like to just stick with Jesus being the way because I don't know about you but as I get to those crossroads, as I want to know a way forward into the future, I don't have all the answers. I don't have time to go experiment with every possibility. And I don't have any way of seeing what my decision is going to do next week, let alone years into the future.

What I believe is that when Jesus says he is the way, he is giving us a way forward into the future, the idea of way, a road, a direction. What he is offering to us is that we might know what we can do so that when we go into the future, it's a good future. We sometimes think of Jesus as "The Way" and we just jump all the way to the end. Well sure, it takes us to the end, to salvation, but there is a way in between. He wants us to walk that way.

The Bible is literally filled through with God asking people to do things a certain way. It starts in garden. You heard it in Genesis this morning. God says "Don't eat of that tree." He asks them to do something a particular way. It was going to be better. Seems like we don't chose that way a lot. But, there is a way.

When people were hearing Peter preach and they were cut to the heart, they asked what they could do, and if they saw Jesus as the way, their lives changed. They started to study and to worship together. To eat together and to share together. Perhaps that is exactly what we need to do when we are first Christians is to spend a lot of time together in worship, in prayer, in study and sharing of life that we might have good and generous hearts.

Oftentimes when I hear this, I think of it as something that Jesus has done for me. He has created a way for me. You know, it's really a way for us. We are invited to go together on this way, to be, as it says later in Acts, the people of the way. Indeed, as he invites us to recognize he is the way, it is something we get to do together: to find our way. It's leading somewhere. And, it's an activity done together. I think that one reason we listen to Jesus is because he is telling us what it looks like to live along the

way. It's what his parables and his teachings are about. When he says, "Love God with your heart, mind, soul and strength and your neighbor as yourself," he is telling us about the way. And when he invited his disciples, when he set up this idea of communion, he didn't set it up and say, "This is for you as individuals." He said this is something we do together. We become a family together. We are set around a table. It's not all on our own. There's a personal element to it when we eat the bread and drink the cup, but we also gain the fellowship. We are part of the family. We are children of God. We are people of the way.

So we are invited to come to the table, to know Jesus is our way. There's a lot to that statement but that is a place to start, to begin to think about him as the way and what that what mean. How is he our road? How is he our path? How does coming to the table and recognizing that sustain us? It gives us a starting point in the midst of all this disorientation. It's a way to break my bubble and let him speak into my life and for the spirit to begin to work, and to find there is real sustenance and energy and fellowship and joy. Amen.